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Introduction

Dominant discourses and discursive spheres can convey ideologies, power relations and the attendant subjectivities of a population and context. In this regard, marketing discourses and literature are rich repositories of histories, cultures and belief systems. The conceptual, methodological and discursive approaches to markets and consumers interweave with political and historical contexts and events in any temporal frame. In post-war America, terms such as 'integrated marketing' and 'market segmentation' are inextricably bound with the colour line and race struggles as defined by the Black civil rights movement in America. The term 'integrated marketing' in the field of advertising, for example, referred to advertising where Blacks and Whites appear together in "socially intimate" situations (Gould *et al*., 1970 p.20) though the nature of social intimacy was very much determined by the prevailing cultural and social norms at that time. As Chambers (2008, p.89) observes, "material goods and appeals to purchase the goods were symbols of where blacks stood in their quest for full status." But as Weems (1989) contends, there has historically been an uneven quality of marketplace in terms of the recognition for black versus white consumers. As such, the struggle for recognition as equal citizens has been tied to and played out in the commercial marketplace. The notion of a viable Black consumer market and disregard for the Black consumer has saturated marketing thought and practice, particularly prior to World War II when interests in the Black consumer were forged through post-war political pressures and civil rights activism (See Brooks 1995; Weems 1998).

This paper examines the academy's approach to the subject of the Negro market from 1950s to 1970s in terms of its discursive paradigm in academic literature written by academic

and marketing practitioners. This site of praxis (as deemed through its dominant discourses) reveals a contested terrain, where the academy and the field of marketing (i.e. as an academic discipline) appropriated a cautious and reticent approach and in tandem their research imperatives and methodologies towards Black consumer research are mediated by the colour line. It marks their underwhelming role as agents of change in a period of heightened political tension. Where they could have provided a leading role in championing anti-apartheid approaches in marketing practices and orientations, they remained reactive rather than proactive in their discourses, displaying not an academic idealism to thwart the colour line but to operate within it strategically and by exhibiting a pseudo-rational objectivity which the academic discipline afforded.

The ideological shifts to accord equality to Black consumers happen in tandem with the economic potential presented by Black consumers which became more difficult to disregard. The site of praxis also enslaved Black consumers into a duality with White consumers, stagnating research methodologies and imperatives where these were collapsed through a paradigm of White backlash. More importantly, it reflected the impotency of the academy in appropriating a more rigorous approach despite its acknowledgement that it was in a position "to influence significantly the future relationships between Blacks and Whites in America" (Gould *et al*., 1970, p.26; Kassarjian, 1971; Hair *et al*., 1977; Solomon *et al*., 1976). If Weems' (1989) study establishes the racialization of the marketplace through an effective survey of well-known denigrating images of African Americans within popular culture, this paper provides a scrutiny of how this racialization was entrenched in marketing discourses where the Black consumer is enslaved through a White market sovereignty.

A review of marketing literature in marketing journals from 1950s to 1970s on the Negro market and marketing practices reveals that the discourses shift from being sceptical and dismissive of the Negro market to being interventionist and advocating marketers to play an active social role in negating cultural stereotypes of the "Black consumer". This period of analysis encompasses a crucial era in the civil rights resistance where there was an intensification of the struggle between 1955 and 1968. Through a combination of non-violent protests and civil disobedience, the movement produced a crisis situation leading to productive dialogues between the activists and government authorities, where the latter along with the business communities had to respond quite immediately to the inequities faced by African Americans. Notable legislative gains of this era included the Civil Rights Act of 1964 banning discrimination based on race, colour, religion, sex, or national origin in employment practices and ending unequal application of voter registration requirements and racial segregation in schools, at the workplace, and by public accommodations. Other significant achievements included the Voting Rights Act of 1965 which restored and protected voting rights; the Immigration and Nationality Services Act of 1965, which opened entry to the U.S. to immigrants other than traditional Northern European and Germanic groups; and the Fair Housing Act of 1968, which banned discrimination in the sale or rental of housing.

The 'moral turn' in the marketing literature, palpable from the mid-1960s, captures how marketing as a field was responding to changing political consciousness and demands of the black consumer market. The turn in discourse can be categorized as a movement away from academic distance to one of advocating change and intervention through market practices, although this was a delayed response in view of their reactionary rather than proactive stance. This paper reviews the literature on the construction of the 'Negro market' and assesses the

resonant themes as well as the strategic and intellectual responses of the marketing academics and professionals. A review of articles on the topic reveals that research occurred in other academic fields beyond the remit of marketing and these different disciplines approached the issue of the Negro market from different research orientations and fields of enquiry. This paper focuses on academic literature that was published in marketing and trade journals which were concerned with marketing to the Black community. The journals reviewed in this paper include *Journal of Marketing Research, Marketing/Communications*, *The Journal of Business, The Journal of Marketing* and *Journal of Advertising Research* published from the 1950s to the 1970s. In reviewing the marketing literature from these journals the paper examines the recurrent and resonant themes as well as the palpable discursive shifts in academic marketing literature during the period under scrutiny.

Historical Context and the Negro Market

There were unprecedented changes in the post-war years in race relations in America and the era from the 1950s to the 1970s represented a transformative journey from severe limitations on personal and civil liberties to the reclamation of rights and redressing of injustices (Morris, 1999: Allen & Farley, 1986). Black Americans, due to discriminatory laws and social practices, experienced severe restrictions in everyday life and liberties in the 1950s. Jim Crow laws were a significant aspect of American society in the 1950s and had been so for over seven decades. These laws inhibited Black people from attending the same schools as Whites, living in the same neighbourhoods, eating in the same restaurants, or staying in the same hotels. Beyond denying Black Americans opportunities in education and employment, Southern states extended these restrictions to voting rights. This created distinct divides between the Whites and Blacks with regard to education, employment, earnings, savings, housing and standard of living.

When the Supreme Court on 17 May 1954 declared segregation in public schools to be illegal, it was considered a watershed ruling in the American Black struggle for emancipation and equality. The civil rights movement, employing a range of tactics from civil disobedience, court litigation, and economic boycotts to mobilization of the mass media, changed the rudimentary structure of race relations in America. The sustained political action resulted in reconfiguring the social status of Black Americans through the enactment of legislation and presidential executive orders, which in turn mediated public opinion. Racial politics dominated both the economic and social fabric of America. Various sociological studies reiterated that race and economics are conjoined (See Frazier, 1937; Johnson, 1934; Davis *et al*., 1941; Myrdal, 1962; Du Bois, 1967). Du Bois' (1967) study of Black Americans in Philadelphia profiled how a regime of racial discrimination impacted a whole host of factors including educational attainment, health, occupation, family organization and the overall quality of life.

In the 1950s and 1960s, there was a rising representation of Blacks in professional, managerial and clerical positions (Allen & Farley, 1986). There were distinct occupational shifts in Blacks compared to Whites between 1960s and 1970s as well. The 1950s and the early 1960s also marked the coming of age of modern technologies and appropriation of these into households. As early as 1958, over 83% of the population owned television sets (Sterling and Kitross, 1978).The broadcasting medium was exploited by the Black protest movement and it provided a lens with which to view the struggles of the Black community, foisting it into the American national consciousness.

In the domain of marketing in the 1950s, various social, ideological and technological processes created a need to review historic tendencies to ignore the Black population as consumers. Improvements in the economic conditions of Black consumers meant there was

increasing interest in how they spent their income. Equally, the movement of Blacks into inner cities impacted the market importance of Blacks in urban quarters. From 1910 and 1970 there was mass migration of Blacks out of the South. This movement, or the Great Migration, entailed the movement of 6 million African Americans from fourteen of the Southern states to the urban Northeast, Midwest and West. The Great Migration has also been classified into two phases; the first phase (1910-1930) witnessed 1.6 million move into northern industrial cities and the second wave characterised from 1940 to 1970 after the Great Depression saw at least 5 million people move to the north and to California and other western states. From 1940 to 1950, the proportion of blacks residing in urban areas grew from 47.9 to 60.6 per cent (Alexis, 1962).

President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 on July 2, 1964, which prohibited discrimination based on race, colour, sex, religion and national origin in places of public accommodation, in federally assisted programs, in employment, in schools and in places of public accommodation and with effect to voting rights. Title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 focuses on public accommodations and while it bars discrimination and segregation with respect to hotels, restaurants, theatres, stadiums, and like facilities under certain conditions, private clubs and non-public establishments are not covered by the title. Title II covered almost all hotels and motels, restaurants, gas stations, and entertainment venues, with exceptions for transient lodgings with less than six rooms and for bona fide private clubs. Brian Landsberg (2015, p.1) observes that Title II was considered a key provision, as well as a very controversial one. Opponents of the act argued that Title II violated the rights of owners of public accommodations to decide whom to serve, characterizing this as both an individual right of association and a property right. Landsberg points out that those opposed to the act "maintained that desegregation would result in monetary loss, because White customers would no longer patronize businesses

once they desegregated" (2015, p.4). The act was also presented as an intrusion into state and local concerns where it would infringe the liberty of the owners and as such the federal government was seen as infringing on state authority. With the implementation of the act, desegregation was more readily accepted in urban rather than rural areas. Despite the opposition or threats about White backlash and in tandem economic loss in admitting Black custom, businesses profited from an expanded market base. Many owners of public accommodations welcomed the law as a means to benefit economically particularly when over 25% of the potential market had been excluded from public accommodation due to segregation (See Landsberg, p.24). The act also highlighted how White businesses could benefit from non-discrimination in public accommodations. The discourses on marketing to Black consumers in many ways mirror this trajectory where threats of White backlash were often replaced with strategies to attract Black consumers and to expand the market base.

Undoubtedly, various forms of social and economic discrimination throughout history had created different consumption patterns amongst the Black population, largely ignored by the marketers and advertisers. Blacks were also becoming better educated and were developing a degree of self-confidence and pride as they progressed economically (Gould *et al*., 1970) and they were demanding to be addressed as consumers in their own right. In the 1960s, "a new 'Negro Market'" had emerged according to management, retail and advertising literature (Sewell 2004, p.138). The 1960s was a prosperous decade for Black women as well, as it brought improvements in their relative income and reduced the gap in purchasing power between them and White women (Allen & Farley, 1987).

The movement of Black Americans to inner cities, rising education standards and improvements in employment, the role of the Black civil rights movement in advocating

political, social and economic reform for Blacks and minorities, and increasing industrialization and consumerism along with rising consumption of news and advertising through television brought unparalleled changes to America. Television began to emerge as a national cultural force in the 1950s. Much of the discussion of television and race centred on the phenomenon of stereotyping and a projection of a reality which conceived its audiences as primarily White (Winston, 1982, p.177). Nevertheless, in the sixties and seventies many of the worst forms of stereotyping on television disappeared (Winston, 1982, p.178).

When the civil rights movement began to attract national attention in the late fifties, African-Americans hardly existed in the television world except for sitcoms such as *Amos 'n' Andy*, which portrayed Blacks in a stereotypical manner. Whilst there were objections in the South to the inclusion of Black characters in television roles, the increasing use of technology in people's everyday lives meant it was difficult to reinforce the separation in every sphere. For example, airplanes were never forced into the segregation system unlike railroads and buses (Winston, 1982, p.180). With increasing industrialization and growing consumerism, television advertising presented a platform to capture mass audiences for advertisers and marketers. Television presented its own economic barriers as the medium was heavily dependent on large advertisers due to the programming costs involved. This 'sponsor barrier' was a real issue in television, as it strove to deliver large audiences and as a result its ability to reach Black audiences and represent Black consumers was limited (See Winston, 1982; Bogle, 2001). Conversely, purchasing power represented a weapon in post-war America and the marketers and advertisers were becoming increasingly aware of its potency (Sewell, 2004). This was demonstrated in the purchasing boycotts employed by civil rights movements before and after the struggle against employers who exhibited discriminatory practices.

The political advocacy by Black civil rights leaders for more representation of Blacks in mainstream media created pressures for positive images, especially in television commercials (Schlinger and Plummer, 1972). The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) lobbied the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to end discriminatory advertising and advertising practices, particularly the depiction of Blacks in a derogatory manner (Cox, 1969). While research reveals that the percentage of total television commercials using Black actors increased each year from 4.6% in 1967 to 11% in 1969, it was also noted that Blacks appeared more in public service and programme-promotional advertising rather than product-related advertising (Dominick & Greenberg, 1970). Black consumers were absent from mainstream advertising yet present as a form of political consciousness that was sweeping the country. Marketing as an academic field and as an industry with a set of distinct practices found itself in a conundrum. On the one hand, its strategic practices had been shaped by the economic and political landscape of segregation and race relations, but on the other it could not afford to ignore the pressures being exerted on American society by the Black civil rights movement, nor the changing demographics of the Black consumer. Equally, marketers were eager to exploit the economic opportunities presented by the Black consumer. The recognition of the Negro consumer and market is captured both as a social imaginary as well as a physical entity through statistics in marketing literature. The following sections examine the resonant and dominant themes which emerged in marketing literature between the 1950s and 1970s.

Marketing Literature in the Period under Review

Marketing literature was compiled from *The Journal of Marketing Research, Marketing/Communications*, *The Journal of Business, The Journal of Marketing*, and *Journal of Advertising Research* published from the 1950s to the 1970s, written by marketing academics

and practitioners. In reviewing the marketing literature from these journals, this paper examines the dominant discourses as well as the palpable discursive shifts in academic marketing literature during the period under scrutiny. A search of relevant key words in academic databases and archives yielded fifty-three journal articles. Some of these were directly relevant to the topic of marketing to Black consumers, whilst others dealt with social conditions which would shape their marketing approaches and strategies. These qualitative readings of the texts informed through the social and political contexts of the period yielded recurrent and dominant discourses which revealed both their ideological stance as well as the strategic responses to a market which presented them with moral and marketing dilemmas despite the economic opportunities it presented.

The Black consumer market pre-dates the 1950s in terms of its historical evolution (See Weems, 1989; Davis, 2013). Equally there was the existence of an elite affluent consumer market segment (See Branchik and Davis, 2009). Judy Foster Davis (2013, p.493), in employing market place opportunity analysis as a framework, examines historical records to explain how and why mainstream marketers targeted African-American consumers. Looking at a period between 1920 and 1970, she engaged with a range of historical material to explain the growing size, increased urbanization and increased spending power of the Black population and their treatment as viable consumers. She contends that while the Black consumer market pre-dates the civil rights movement which peaked in the 1950s and 1960s, they were not the main drivers of interest in the Black consumer. She nevertheless asserts that "of key importance is that fact that legal and socio-economic gains secured by civil rights efforts made Black consumers on a large-scale appealing to mainstream marketers"(2013, p.488).

Similarly, Robert Weems and Lewis Randolph (2001) argue that the government interest in promoting Black business actually began in the 1920s well before President Richard M. Nixon's 'Black Capitalism' initiative in the 1960s. In acknowledging the viability and existence of the Black consumer market prior to the 1950s, the paper draws on the crucial nature of the time frame. It examines marketing discourses about the Negro market within a specific but crucial time of heightening civil rights struggles and gains to reveal how the praxis of marketing approached Black consumers. As such, it examines the discursive construction of the Negro market and captures the dominant approaches which shaped the academy and practice. What is distinct from this body of literature is that Black consumers emerge through a discursive struggle where White consumers become the referential point or the limit of consumerism. This retards the identity of Black consumers, reflecting the lack of sophistication in the academy and the field of marketing to overcome this bias.

Marketing research and literature from the 1950s to the 1970s show a distinct shift in viewpoints from perceiving the Negro market as a mythic notion to assessing the relevant strategies to reach the market. Many of the assumptions concerning Black people as consumers were based on negative stereotypes, myths and misinformation and constrained marketers' efforts to cultivate the Black consumer market (Davis, 2013, p.472). The initial discourses reflect the construction of the Negro market as a non-existent entity, often premised on the assumption that race alone cannot be a characteristic to construct a market. Hence the Negro market was cast into a dilemmatic proposition of being denied an identity yet being ensconced in segregated marketing practices.

From this ensued a discourse of framing strategic marketing responses to the Negro market, underpinned by an overarching recognition that it was dilemmatic as it potentially held

the risk of alienating the established White market. This dilemmatic discourse was a recurrent theme in marketing discourses throughout the 1960s, where reaching out to the Negro market was framed as a risk and marketing research was pre-occupied with administering strategic responses and in testing the reception of Black or White consumers to advertising with Black or White models.

A discursive shift occurs in the marketing literature in the 1960s where there is a lobby to not only recognise the rights of the Black consumer but to end the segregation in marketing strategies and practices. From the 60s, marketing discourses argue for integrated marketing and lobby for a review of the practice of market segmentation along colour lines. By the early 1970s, African-Americans were recognised as a legitimate consumer segment by mainstream marketers, facilitated through a number of processes including the establishment of corporate ethnic marketing divisions, dedicated advertising budgets for African-American audiences, and the emergence of Black-owned advertising agencies (Davis, 2013, p.471; 2002).

The segregation in society and the reconfiguration of race relations was intimately projected in the field of marketing as a discipline where the research imperative and strategies were mediated by the struggles and progression of ideas in the wider society. Alan Andreasen (1978) arrives at a similar conclusion in his assessment of the market literature on 'ghetto marketing', which focused on economically and socially deprived consumers including those with lower income or minority racial status. While the Black consumer is implicated in ghetto marketing, the term targets a wider population beyond ethnic distinctions. Andreasen (1978, p.22) believed that urban riots in the mid 60's altered the prevailing views of marketing, leading to research which was more politically relevant as opposed to merely addressing managerial issues.

In the earlier marketing and economic discourses, the Black consumers were ignored both because of their economic status and racial identity. Even though the discursive shift is evident in the marketing literature and rhetoric between the early 1960s and the tail end of the decade, the research is far from voluminous and does not necessarily emanate from the field of marketing. More importantly, the early literature on ghetto marketing which included the Black consumer lacked an element of continuity. Seminal research theories and findings were not employed to build on more recent works. This failure to integrate earlier seminal works and theoretical paradigms impeded a consolidation and augmentation of research in the area. This meant that research in the field was often reactionary and short-lived rather than trend-setting and anticipatory of emerging social conditions, with a preponderance of certain issues whilst others were overlooked. The time lapses within one seminal scholarly work and another and the failure to cite these works often led to a discontinuity in the rhetoric. New theories failed to build on related fields or relevant works and this lack of consolidation often led to ideas and advocacy on the Negro market being disparate in the early 1950s till the mid-1960s.

Andreasen (1978, p.20) cites the example of David Caplovitz's book *The Poor Pay More* (1963) in making his point. Caplovitz's book was the first major study to focus exclusively on the consumption problems of the disadvantaged and laid the ground work for a theoretical model of poor consumers' problems, as well as making recommendations about what should be done. Caplovitz observed the marketing system in ghettoes as unethical, deviant and rife with illegal practices (1963, p.180). From 1964 until 1967, only ten articles were written and none cited Caplovitz's work. Andreasen's survey on ghetto marketing revealed that for the four years after the publication of Caplovitz's work the contribution of the marketing profession to the field was sparse. He noted that until 1968, two of the three most frequently cited works were

published prior to 1964 and outside of the marketing literature by people not within the mainstream of the marketing discipline. These two works by Marcus Alexis (1962) and Henry A Bullock (1961) were anchored in the segmentation research tradition and sought to test for differences between Blacks and Whites, and had only secondary interest in the question of marketing disadvantage raised by Caplovitz's work (Andreasen, 1978, p.22).

Another type of research resonant during this period was the comparison of pricing in low-income and high-income areas. The research findings often revealed that while there was no discriminatory pricing in ghetto areas by supermarkets, there were fewer supermarkets in low-income areas and that corner and independent shops tended to charge more in low-income areas (Andreasen, 1978, p.23). Frederick Sturdivant's book *The Ghetto Market Place* published in 1969 similarly lamented the dearth of research in this area. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that in the late 1960s, marketing research was starting to make renewed emphasis between ghetto consumer issues and minority economic development. D. Parke Gibson's book, *The $30 Million Negro* (1969), for example, marked a milestone in Negro market research as it stressed the importance of the Black market as a vital market segment in its own right. It also prompted studies which countered the claim that there were negative effects in using Blacks in advertisements.

By the end of 1968, three articles on the problem of ghetto marketing had appeared in an issue of *Social Science Quarterly* devoted particularly to Black America. Additionally, several books and articles published in 1969 confirmed the salience of this issue (Andreasen, 1978, p.22). Andreasen observed that the topic of Negro marketing received institutional backing when the American Marketing Association (AMA) sponsored a conference on 'Improving Inner City Marketing' at the State University of New York at Buffalo in June 1970. This in effect helped

bring Black marketing research into the mainstream and to encourage an exploration of the issue in terms of breadth, depth and sophistication. Andreasen concluded that while there was a growing interest in ghetto and minority marketing in the late 1960s, there was a maturing of interest in the field between 1970 and 1972 and a distinct demise after 1973 and 1974, where the term ghetto marketing is less evident as a terminology.

The area of Black consumers marketing remained an area of research interest beyond the academy commissioned by Black newspapers and magazine publishers beginning in the 1940s. These market research investigations both insisted on the viability of a Black consuming public and, at the same time, provided White advertisers with their only window onto Black purchasing habits. Producing convincing data on the purchasing power of the post-war Negro market was an essential survival strategy for Black newspapers and periodicals, which needed reliable data to convince White businesses to advertise in these media outlets. The results of these subsequent empirical or quantitative studies were reported on heavily in the Black press, however, with less attention paid in the White press until the early 1960s, when articles on the "ethnic market" and the "Negro market" appeared with increasing regularity in the business trade press (Brown, 2011, p.185).

Geng Cui (2001), in assessing literature the topic of ethnic marketing from 1932 to 1997, points out that the first scholarly research that focused on minority consumers was published in 1932, entitled *The Southern Negro as a Consumer* by Paul Edwards, and that the next study on the Negro consumer did not appear until two decades later. Cui (2001, p.24) concurs with Andreasen that during the civil rights activism in America in the 1960s, the economic conditions of Blacks became a major concern in American society and this prompted the need to consider strategies such as integrated marketing. Cui points out that there was a renewed interest amongst

marketers to look at access to goods and services and to discern and advocate against discrimination in the market place. In 1973, with the beginning of the affirmative action programme, there was a loss in momentum in such research.

Despite these discursive representations in the academy and in the field of marketing research, it is important to note the presence of a viable and relatively affluent Black consumer market which existed prior to the 1950s. The intensification of civil rights resistance between 1950s and the 1970s contributed significantly to the expansion of an affluent Black consumer market (See Weems, 1998; Davis, 2013). Nevertheless, marketing research and academic discourses were saturated with reticence despite the existence of interest in the Black consumer market.

Dominant discourses in marketing literature

As mentioned earlier, a dominant theme of the marketing literature was to frame the Negro market as dilemmatic. This dilemmatic discourse permeated academic and intellectual thinking throughout the period under review. Even with interventionist paradigms there was an implicit recognition that many of the marketing strategies were experimental, not completely conclusive and yet to be widely accepted in the market. Controlled studies and observations of White and Black consumers also failed to provide comprehensive answers to approaching a market which hitherto had been under-explored in terms of its economic potential.

One of the recurring themes during this period under review is that the early articulations often doubted or explicitly dismissed the existence of a Negro market. There was a palpable scepticism of whether "there is such a thing as a Negro market and to what extent is its substance?" (cf. Young, 1963). Often questions were raised about whether the Negro market

could be distinguished from "any other lower-income, lower-educated and geographically concentrated groups" (Bauer *et al*., 1965, p.2). Questions about the validity of a Negro market were complemented by racial stereotyping of the Black consumer as she was often constructed as being uninterested or incompetent to judge the quality of goods. There was an explicit recognition that "marketing to Blacks mystifies both the marketing and advertising community" and whether the problem stemmed from characterising a Black market when there might be no more a Black market than a White market (Cohen, 1970, p.7; Bauer *et al*., 1965, p.2; Chambers, 1980). From the middle of the 1960s, this view was replaced by discourses which sought to represent the Black consumer as discerning and perhaps more diligent about the symbolic value of goods compared to White consumer (Bauer *et al*., 1965, p.2). Researchers also discussed the stereotype of the Blacks being more brand conscious than Whites. This consumerism and love for branded items was perceived as a compensation for their status in society. Henry Clark (1969, p.69) in assessing the change among better educated young Black consumers with regard to their attitude towards brand loyalty, commented that "many Blacks are learning the hard way that a collection of prestige symbols only superficially relieves psychic wounds left over from years of racial apprehension".

Those arguing against the dismissal of the Negro market often substantiated it either through the actual dollar worth or through elements which made it distinctive. Alexis (1959, p. 114) pointed out that "America's 17m Negros spend an estimated 17 billion dollars per year on goods and services and their purchases are vital to the success of any business" and that the potential of the market was often unrealised. In 1968, 25 million Black consumers represented $30 billion worth of purchasing power per annum (Gould *et al*., 1970) and this market was seen to be neglected both in terms of sales and market research (Sullivan, 1945, p.68). These

marketers who lobbied for more interest in the Negro market were also equally interested in how to appeal to the Black consumer. Alexis (1959) observed that "today the Negro rightfully wants to be advertised to" and hence they "should be talked to and not talked down to". Other researchers reiterated the existence of a Negro market based on the government's programme of economic development for the Black community and initiatives for Black businesses (Bauer & Cunningham, 1970). These, they argued, provided the basis for a difference in consumer behaviour.

A resonant discourse in marketing literature was whether the term 'Negro market' should be captured in economic terms or through racial lines. The argument often centred on whether race was an important determinant in purchasing patterns and consumer behaviour. Marketing discourses raised doubts on whether markets could be segregated along colour lines instead of social demographics such as income levels, education and standard of living. The strategy of segmenting the market through the colour line thus came under scrutiny and criticism. Barban & Cundiff (1964) argued common characteristics of ethnicity or race cannot be the basis for market segmentation as it should be based on common characteristics of consumers with their attendant habits and lifestyles. Similarly, B.E. Sawyer (1962) proclaimed that race was less of an issue and that there were other determinants in consumer patterns. Other marketing discourses argued that this market had special characteristics that distinguished Negroes from other groups, portraying them as 'self-segmenting' (Bauer *et al*., 1965). Nevertheless, race was generally considered a demographic variable and was used as such in measuring the size and growth of the market (Cohen, 1970, p.8).

Much of the research in the 1950s and 1960s also rested on the assumption that Black communities were homogenous in terms of behavioural habits. Towards the end of the 1960s

researchers were much more conscious of not assuming it as a homogenous community (Portis, 1966). Dorothy Cohen (1970) recommended a segmentation strategy to target different segments within a community rather than treating the whole of the Black population as one community. According to Cohen (1970 p.11), advertising can provide the opportunity for the higher-level Black to secure the recognition he deserves and incentive for the lower-level Black to strive for similar status (1970, p.11).

Barban and Cundifff (1964) observed that marketers often targeted their advertising messages at White audiences and assumed it would reach Black consumers at the same time. John Petrof (1967, p.407) argued that segmentation of the market in terms of White and Black consumers can be useful when advertisers are trying to target products exclusively to the Black consumer but it is more efficient to advertise in a general newspaper if the product is not targeted at a niche community like the Negro market. A turn to treat Whites and Blacks as separate markets had led to advertising becoming racially segregated and the strategy of market segmentation was polarized in marketing discourses. It was either viewed as sustaining racial segregation and stereotypes or a form of endorsement and recognition of the Black community which hitherto had been ignored or dismissed by the industry.

Segregated marketing strategies came under criticism on moral and social grounds and there were calls to integrate advertising (Barban and Cundiff, 1964, p.53). Their criticism is that research tended to stress how Blacks lived and how they perceived advertising rather than how they consumed. Others such as D. Parke Gibson, contended that “special marketing was not a form of segregation but rather a form of recognition” (cf. *Retailing: The Negro Market,* Time Magazine, 1962, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,938348-1,00.html). According to Weems, corporate advertising and marketing exhibited an ongoing insensitivity

toward Black consumers. Weems uses the expression of 'blaxploitation' which referred to corporate America's disproportionate promotion of products viewed as destructive to the social fabric of Black urban communities.

The token inclusion of Black models and their lack of presence in mass-market product advertising came under notice and criticism. Harold Kassarjian (1969), in surveying the number of advertisements in selected consumer magazines, found that there were 5.3% blacks in 1946 compared to 6% in 1965. He noted that while Black models endorsed clothing, records, and travel and tourism, they were not portrayed in heavily-advertised categories such as medicines, automobiles, toothpaste, deodorants, ready-to-eat cereals and soap products. Academic research at this time was increasingly interested in verifying whether Negro representation in the advertisements had increased in this period and the research design often entailed a quantitative content analysis of counting advertising pages in magazines (Kassarjian, 1970; Cox, 1972).

Fred Aker noted (1968, p.283) that while trade publications emphasised Negro-White differences in consumption behaviour, academic research tended to either minimise Negro-White buying behaviour differences or demonstrate that Negroes are less brand conscious than Whites (Aker 1968, p.283). Brands had become a sign of achievement among Blacks and a status symbol. Such research orientations, particularly segmentation research tradition, created a discourse of duality where comparative studies were designed to show how Blacks behaved in comparison to the White consumer. This research tradition saw a number of studies to negate the assumption that Blacks and Whites shop differently. For example, Haines *et al*. (1963) demonstrated that residents of a Black community shopped no differently than did Whites in other areas within or near the same city. Most studies showed little difference in purchase patterns (Gensch and Satelin, 1972, p.141; Hair *et al*., 1979). Some discourses depicted the Black

consumer as more brand loyal than the White consumer and having a propensity for branded goods (Cohen, 1970; Kassarjian, 1964; Bauer *et al*., 1965).

Other discourses highlight the rise of 'Black capitalism' based on the assumption that Black consumers prefer to buy products from Black-owned firms (Gensch and Staelin, 1972, p.141). Gensch and Staelin's (1972, p.147) discourse of Black capitalism was based on their study which found that "buying Black was an important consideration for consumers who used the local black-owned shopping area". In most parts, there is less discussion or silence about the historical trajectory of the Black consumer or the injustices or unequal treatment they have been subjected to. Often the discourses glossed over the realities that faced the Black community. Academic marketing discourses often appropriated a pseudo-rational objectivity in engaging with the emotive issue of race. However, it was not always possible to conceal cultural stereotypes of Black consumers as revealed by this extract from Bauer *et al*.;

> "Some exceptions give the Negro market some distinctive characteristics. For example, it would appear that toilet soap, particularly as associated with deodorizing properties has special importance for the Negro women as compared with White women. Perhaps this is only a reflection of middle-class dictum about cleanliness being next to godliness, perhaps also a reaction to the belief that Negroes smell different than Whites" (Bauer *et al*., 1965, p.2).

The discursive turn in the marketing discourses, whilst palpable in late 60's and early 70's, was intimately tied to the performance and reaction of the White consumers. This entwining of the Black consumer with the reaction and response of the White consumer limited the areas of research as well as the attendant methodologies that emerged. This delimited the

field, often restricting the research imperative as well as research design. The overriding discourse of the White backlash and the cautious approach of marketers are examined in the next section. As Chambers (2008, p.121) points out, "just as advertising practitioners and their clients still profess impotence when accused of promoting cigarettes to children, they presented themselves as unwilling victims of customs and values regarding racism, afraid of angering clients and white consumers".

Discourse of the White Backlash

Since the mid-1960s, whilst there was increasing interest in marketing goods to Black consumers, they were not openly courted as it was perceived there would be a backlash from White consumers (Alexis, 1959, p.115; Barban, 1969; Cagley and Cardozo, 1970; Guest, 1970; Muse, 1971; Stafford *et al*., 1970; Schlinger and Plummer, 1972; Hair *et al*., 1977). The discourse of the 'White backlash' is a resonant theme in marketing literature, where marketing to Black consumers is framed as a risk strategy. There was an overt acceptance that appealing to the Black market came at the price of alienating White consumers. The issue of White backlash meant that marketers and advertisers were interested in exploiting the Black media to keep their advertising distinct and separate from advertising to the White consumer (Gould *et al*., 1970; Cohen, 1970). According to Bush *et al*. (1979, p.341), research measuring the reaction of White consumers to Black models had been conducted since 1964 and the findings had not been consistent.

Espeth Brown (2011) discusses the US advertising industry as a site of symbolic apartheid. She contends that the emergence of Black modelling agencies in the late 1940s signified a renewed wave of efforts by Negro market experts and civil rights groups to both

render visible a Black consuming public and to change how Blacks were depicted in White advertising. As mentioned earlier, marketers, advertisers and advertising agencies were cautious about using Black models in advertisements despite societal pressures to review such practices (Schlinger and Plummer, 1972). Some marketers argued against all Black advertising and reasoned that Black advertising might have an adverse effect on Black consumers, where a Black man is supposed to identify with his oppressor and react negatively to Blacks (Grier and Cobbs, 1969). This theory that middle-class Negroes don't identify with Blacks and seek validation through White America provided a premise to resist using Black models in advertising (Frazier, 1962).

With the Negro market largely ignored in the pre-war and post-war eras, marketers often assumed that they lacked the purchasing power and bought popular national brands anyway as they emulated the Whites (Bauer *et al*., 1965, p.2; Krugman, 1966). Such normative assumptions about Blacks appropriating White values often influenced the research design and research imperatives. For example, Bauer and Cunningham (1970) in their study of Black male Scotch drinkers, assumed that the cultural reference group for middle- and upper-income Blacks is Whites. These discourses often portrayed Negroes as a group who had accepted the aspirations and values of the White middle-class culture but lacked the purchasing power to acquire the goods which symbolised these values. The Black consumers were constructed as facing a 'Negro Dilemma', where they have accepted the social values of White middle-class culture but are at a disadvantage in acquiring the goods which represent some of these values (Bauer *et al*., 1965, p.2);

> "…the basic dilemma of Negroes is whether to strive against odds to attain these middle-class values (and the goods which come with them), or give in and live without most of

them. It is this response of Negroes to this dilemma that creates two categories of persons whom we have labelled as 'strivers' and 'non-strivers'" (Bauer et al., 1965, p.2).

Marketers had cultivated a perception that for advertisements to be effective they had to be either Black or White (Cohen, 1970, p.7). This need to understand how Blacks and Whites reacted to all-Black or all-White television commercials led to an 'effects tradition' in marketing research, particularly one of measuring White and Black audiences' responses to commercials endorsed by Black or White models (Solomon *et al*., 1976). This effects tradition continued well into the 1970s. Most research sought to measure the White response to Blacks in advertising or vice versa. This meant replicating studies after a period to test for consistency or change. Others entailed comparing reaction to advertising materials consumed by Black against White consumers. Mixed reaction and inconclusive findings from such studies meant that businesses were often reluctant to use Black models in promotional materials (Solomon *et al*., 1976, p.431; Bush *et al*., 1974; Schlinger and Plummer, 1972).

Many studies also found that Blacks responded very favourably towards integrated advertising (Barban and Cundiff, 1969; Barban, 1969; Tolley and Goett, 1972; Choudhury and Schmid, 1974). Marketing researchers such as Solomon *et al*. (1976) sought to assure through their research that cautious attitudes towards Black models may be unwarranted. They advised marketers from being too concerned about the adverse sales resulting from the use of Black models in promotional materials as White consumers respond in a similar manner to models of both races. They sought to assure that slight attitudinal differences between Black and White consumers would not result in point-of-sales differences. Others argued that Black models themselves should be credible for the audiences in order for them to believe in the message and

brand. Marketers deliberated endlessly about whether integrated advertising was the way to go for advertisers.

The practice of using Black models began from the mid-60s but advertisers and marketers were less forthcoming about mass media advertising. In the 1960s and the early 70s, despite the civil rights movement's lobbying with the NAACP for Black representation in advertisements, most consumer-product companies refused to use Blacks in their mass market television advertisements as they feared Whites would be unwilling to use products endorsed by the Blacks. Marketers seeking to capitalise on Black and White consumers would run advertisements in the Black media but would guard against their products becoming Black. Nevertheless, integrated marketing was most noticeable on television where Blacks and Whites appear together in more or less socially intimate situations. In such instances advertisers often said that they were under a double-bind as they 'risked' a backlash from Whites who viewed integration as undesirable and also a product boycott from Blacks who consider it as hypocritical (Gould *et al*., 1970). Inevitably, the market was conceived and experienced through the colour line rather than the social demographics such as income level, education or consumer attitudes and lifestyle.

Marketers in general adopted a cautious approach to integrated marketing. Marketing and advertising discourse produced much debate about whether the Negro market was a special one which should be treated differently. Proponents of this special market approach argued that Blacks would respond more to material which reaches them through Black media which employ Black peoples' idioms and speech. Those who opposed such polarization contended that market decisions are made on economic and/or sociological grounds rather than racial lines (Wheatley, 1971). Advertising-related dilemmas also brought to the fore discussions about whose social

reality these advertisements should portray. Unlike the normative assumptions made by the likes of Bauer and Cunningham, Gould *et al*. (1970, p.21) argued that Black consumers "do not identify with situations portrayed in the mass print media and that what they need is assurance and confidence that the product is for them and their business is wanted." These researchers advocated that commercial representations must be slices of Black -- not White -- people's lives (cf. Gould *et al*., 1970, p.21).

While marketers were experimenting with integrated marketing in the late 60s and early 70s, Black consumers felt that the primary motive for integrated advertising was prompted by the profit motive and by pressures from the civil rights movement. As such, they viewed it as tokenism and attributed it to avarice rather than political reform in the industry (Gould *et al*., 1970, p.26). Kassarjian (1971, p.393), while observing that 1.3% of all advertising in 1969 contained a Black face, nevertheless concluded that "unfortunately progress is still slow, and we have very little to be proud of – the Black model quite clearly is still a token Negro".

Despite the scepticism, there was a recognition among market researchers that they were "in a unique position to influence significantly the future relationships between Blacks and Whites in America" (Gould *et al*., 1970, p.26; Kassarjian, 1971; Hair *et al*., 1977; Solomon *et al*., 1976). However, the discourses in the field of marketing and the academy remained fragmented in championing change. The marketing discourses also showed reluctance in supporting Black media as advertising agencies did not have a preference for it. Black advertising organizations, while providing access to the Negro market, were seen as having high preparation costs and high costs per thousand in terms of reaching the population. There was also dissatisfaction expressed with the results of the copy (Alexis, 1959).

The moral turn in advertising is evident in the late 60s and early 70s, where marketers spoke of intervention beyond market strategies. Cohen (1970, p.3) argued fervently that there exists an opportunity for advertising to improve its social image by giving more attention to the Black community. The moral discourse of social responsibility, as marketers and advertisers sought to go beyond advocating consumer rights to recognising that structural changes and attitudinal shifts, was required to reform the industry through recruitment and training of Black staff in creative and consultative roles. Kelvin Wall (1970, p.48) an American producer, entrepreneur and activist, in commenting on integrated advertising, observed that beyond producing advertisements which create a sense of equality in lifestyle and values, Black employment is vitally important in creative levels in the advertising industry to improve credibility and acceptance. This moral turn under the banner of 'social responsibility' in many ways acknowledged the lack of sustained active agency in the field of marketing and the academy to champion change and challenge stereotypes with a changing social and political climate in post-war America. Additionally, the notion of social responsibility was increasingly incorporated into the field of marketing to in the 1970s as a means to appeal to the Black consumer market.

Conclusion

The discursive construction of the Negro market in the academic marketing literature from the 1950s to the 1970s that was reviewed in this study revealed that this market was overwhelmingly framed as dilemmatic or evoking a 'Negro dilemma'. The need to approach and find marketing strategies to address the Black consumer created a body of literature which can be seen as part of the historiography of racial struggles and politics which saturated marketing practices, research imperatives, research design, and methodologies as well as the underlying ontological

assumptions. The shifts in constructions of the Black consumer as uninitiated and emulating White values rather than embracing the rising wave of consumerism in industrializing America crafted much of the deliberations as an opportunity cost, where reaching out to the Black market meant in some ways compromising the established White market. This depicted the Negro market as one of risk, impregnated with the imminence of White backlash. The White consumer as a reference point for evaluating the Negro market delimited the development of more sophisticated strategies, collapsing it into a binary of comparison with the White market.

In the late 1960s and early 70s, these articulations were much more nuanced and sought to de-couple the Black consumer from the White backlash discourse and to study the Black market as an entity in its own right without simplifying it as homogenous. The moral and interventionist turns in research and the need for change beyond strategic marketing interventions invited close scrutiny of the structural impediments of the industry itself and its recruitment practices. This delayed introspection onto itself marked a maturing of the Negro market discourse from one of reticence and dismissal of the Black consumer to that of recognising the field and academy's own deficits to playing a more concerted and forceful role in championing change and the cessation of apartheid practices in marketing theory and practice in this era.

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